291 or netting, which reaches down to their knees or a little less. Some men of more sophisticated taste sometimes put on a sort of waistcoat, hand woven from garavata fiber and painted. Of the same material [415] and made in the same way is the bag which they are in the habit of carrying at their side, in which, when they travel, they keep their flint and steel or the fiber and wax for their arrows and other small things which they use. When at home, at least at nighttime, they wear no clothes—possibly to keep from damaging them."

622 "There is no use looking for chiefs or captains with any
621 authority, for among them there are neither any who give orders nor any who obey them—they only have friendly respect for, and sometimes follow the advice of, someone among them who enjoys a certain prestige or who is very likeable. In time of war or common danger, some make limited alliances between a few huts only, for sake of unity." [602]

582 "They marry without any visible ceremony and without formalities of any sort; nor do the parents play a role in the matrimony of their children, who marry when they wish to and to whom they wish—the women always give preference to a man who is adept at fishing, and the men seek out those women who are active and diligent in their search for fruit. Once a man and a woman have come
585 to an understanding they go off together into the forests for a few days,
591 doing whatever they see fit to do, and return then to the encampment where they either set up for themselves or go to live with the woman's
595 parents-in-law. Few indeed are those who have more than one wife, even though divorce, among the younger set, is frequent. Adultery
837 also appears to be rare; the women do not consent to others having
684 affairs with their husbands, on the contrary, they go to their houses and insult, threaten and fight them, a thing which often proves highly amusing to the men, women and children of the same camp, all of whom come out of their abodes to see the gestures and grimaces which the two women perform for each other's benefit, laughing uproariously and applauding noisily and gleefully the name calling and cursing, blows and kicks which they meet out to each other rather disgracefully.

774 "It would be useless to look for religious beliefs amongst a people so miserable, not to say stupid. It seems, nevertheless, that they do have some idea of the soul, which they call neusec, but about whose
776 ultimate destiny they have no clear idea. They also have a jumbled

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out chunks of flesh, and can even [180] be of some slim service, similar to that which is told concerning that fellow in the "Ricciardetto." It is an ovoid, laterally flattened fish. The ray is round, vertically flattened and has three barbs on its tail. It can make a very painful and dangerous wound with the middle barb when the fish is stepped on and lashes out with its tail. Some grow to be over a meter in diameter. It lies on the bottom of quiet pools, as close as it can to the bank; it would seem to be viviparous. The yacaré, a kind of crocodile, will without warning bite the leg or arm of an unfortunate father, drag him to the bottom and there devour him.

So it is that bathing, which was so necessary to cool ourselves off in the suffocating heat, was always embittered by the presence of these maneaters.

The married woman is faithful to her husband by inclination, education and fear. There are tales of terrible revenges wreaked by husbands upon their unfaithful wives, over whom they have power of life and death. While they are single they can be and often are free in their ways. It cannot be doubted that the whites attract their interest, if matters of racial difference do not intervene, for the poorest white is always in a position to give better presents than is the richest chief.

These women love decorations and clothing, but have no use for skirts or corsets. They wrap themselves from the waist down in a blanket, and hold it up with a belt or cord which is hidden behind the fold of cloth. In addition to this they know how to distribute these rags in such a way as to accentuate their good figure and yet at the same time not encumber themselves, a skill not to be expected on first seeing them. Their dress consists of robes, and when they have any they put them all on, be it winter or summer, partly because of the nomadic existence they lead and partly because they like to do so. One might say that the saying: what wards off cold also wards off heat, is particularly applicable to them.

Both men and women love bright colors (particularly red) and variety, but they also like white cloth. When they put on any garment they always do so in such a way as to leave one arm free. The women have a high regard for the kind of shirts which we wear.

The women make their own ornaments out of leather and broken shells, achieving a certain elegance of form, though with a greater or lesser degree of rusticity. They wear, from childhood, a sort of

In places such as these in which women lose their attractions at an early age and in which men are decimated by the constant wars, the custom of polygamy is a social necessity for the tribe which would otherwise run out of members, and a physical necessity for the men and for many women who would otherwise stay single. Nevertheless there are not lacking loose women, free in their favors, for whom the Indians use the name of amoeccue. M 595 M 837

The man is jealous and cruel to his wife if he suspects her of infidelity. While we were visiting the camp of Peilo we had the opportunity of hearing a husband, deep within one of the huts, beat and threaten his wife with death because she had been careless and fallen into the hands of a soldier. Nu-a-ilon-lá (I shall kill you) he ground out between his teeth. On another occasion a woman, after her husband had been absent for two years, took up with another man; the husband returned, lay in wait, ran after and caught his wife and slit her belly open with a knife before the whites could prevent it. This woman did not die and as soon as she was well returned to live with her would-be murderer.

When the Indians intend to get married they dye their cheeks and the region around the eyes red. The man will give his love a present at the time he makes his proposal and if the woman gives [184] an affirmative answer the man gives her a dowry of whatever he has, such as sheep, chickens, skins, etc. M 584 [302]

If the families approve of the union the couple goes to live near one of them, should they not approve then the pair leave the hut and often even leave the camp. Once consent is granted, the nuptial ceremony is the act of consummation.

Among the Chiriguanos, when a man wants to ask for a girl's hand he places a bundle of firewood and a small deer or other provision at her door; if on the following morning the woman lights the fire and prepares a meal with the food supplied, the proposal is considered accepted and the suitor repairs to the table. Some people hold that this is also a Mataco custom, but the facts which I have been able to glean about the matter do not confirm this. C 584

The Chiriguano chiefs, however, have a privilege, which is that they cannot be rejected by the women of their choice: this is a great stroke of luck for them. The chief reveals his inclination with the offering of a piece of meat or some other thing; the girl cooks it, and they then share both meal and bed. The chiefs, especially the C 584 622

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

CHAPTER IV.

Courtship and marriage.

A salient feature in the social life of all Chaco tribes, and one in which they differ considerably from the tribes whom I learned to know in tropical South America, is the great sexual liberty allowed to young people before marriage. As soon as a girl has passed her first menstruation she is considered free to choose for herself occasional lovers, and generally she does not delay in making use of this right. This free sexual life is particularly indulged in during the algaroba season, in connection with the feasts and dances which then take place. The girls avoid the natural consequences of this sexual license by abortion or infanticide, customs which are also approved by the social morality of the Chaco Indians. Having enjoyed this free life for some years, the girl ultimately decides to marry, and then as a rule becomes a faithful wife as long as the husband does not himself neglect his duties towards her. This general state of things is met with all along the Pilcomayo, although customs of course differ to some extent in different tribes. I shall first relate the customs practised among the Choroti in courtship and marriage.

The *Choroti* are a strictly monogamous people. During my stay among the different Choroti tribes I never found a single case of polygamy, and I was moreover able to confirm that polygamy is strongly disapproved of by custom and the social morality of the people. It is first of all rendered impossible by the jealousy of the women who, as I have mentioned before, have a decisive influence in matters of love and take the first step towards contracting marriage.

Courtship therefore among the Choroti assumes rather a peculiar form, inasmuch as the girls play the active, and the young men the passive part. Marriages are as a rule contracted during the algaroba season from November to March, when there is a good supply of food in the villages and

3: Metraux E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7

NOTES

I. The Spirits of the Dead

1) *Husek* (*o-husek* or *no-husek* = my soul) is the »god» we have inside of us when we are living. This spirit goes away when we dream. It does not reside in any particular organ but is everywhere in our body. It is through the *husek* that we know what is going to happen. When we die the *husek* becomes an *āhat*, when the *āhat* dies it becomes a bird called *xwitson*. The *xwitson* becomes an *katak* fly and the fly a *ḳipḳip* bird, the *ḳipḳip* becomes a spider (*xwistę́*) and the *xwistę́* becomes a bat (*asus*) and then disappears.

2) The love spirit is called *soitayax*. She is beautiful, all adorned with necklaces and bracelets, exactly like a woman falling in love. She is very fond of men and it is she who commands women to love. When a woman leaves her husband and goes to another man, it is because her soul has tired of the first husband. In the same way a man takes another wife, his soul craves a change.

3) Now and then the *āhat* comes back shortly after death. In such cases, he is very bad. His eyes are yellow. If an *āhat* comes back he goes directly to the house where women are alone, generally the women become frightened and run away. The *āhat* like to sleep with women. They tell them that they are going to bathe and that they will come back very clean and good-looking.[1]

4) At times the spirit comes back to visit his grave, but this only occurs a few days after death, before he has had time to go to his family house in the underworld.

5) The soul goes to the abode of the dead riding a beautiful horse, well-saddled and carrying all that is necessary for the trip. The soul also drives in a car, from one village to another and wanders everywhere. On his way to the land

[1] It is said that the *āhat* are dirty, but my informant was not of that opinion. He told me that all the *āhat* he had seen were clean and beautiful.

3: Metraux E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7

584 chooses a husband for his daughter, but he would never go
585 against his wife's wish. The ceremony is not celebrated.
The son-in-law lives first at the hut of his wife's father where
he stays for three months at least, working for him. Later
591 he can build a hut for himself. The young couple live in a
separate compartment.

Nowadays either the bride follows the bridegroom or he
595 goes to live with her, according to circumstances. Ordinarily
men have only one wife, some have two, but never more.
[593] Except for adultery a husband never beats his wife. Although
837 a woman is exposed to a severe beating if her husband disco-
vers that she has betrayed him, it does not prevent many
women from doing so. A woman will choose a day when
her husband is absent and then send a child to tell her lover
that she is alone. A couple must not be seen together for
[578] there would be some gossip. A man generally leaves an
unfaithful wife after beating her first. He challenges his
[831] rival and they fight with knives. The different »milks»
must not be mixed up.

XVI. Chiefs

622 All the members of the tribe follow the *cacique* everywhere
without protest. As for him, he is responsible for all the
members of his group. If one of the latter has committed
[672] a theft, even outside of the tribe, the *cacique* will be arrested
by the police. Quarrels among members of the same group
[627] are settled by the *cacique*. If a big *cacique* is killed in a
[726] fight his troop retreats immediately, even if the other *caciques*
are still living.

XVII. War

726 In ancient times, when a young man was going to war,
825 he pinched the skin of his thigh and drove the sharpened
bone of a jaguar into it. This operation was supposed to
make the warrior courageous. Members of a war party
did the same with a peccari's bone so they would be fierce,

5: Fock E-5 (1962) 1963 SI7 Mataco SI7

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Fig. 3.—Normally separated during the day because of different occupations, the single family joins during the night in gossip and sleep. In winter the Mataco sleep indoor on platform beds, in summer normally in the open on furs and with a log as a pillow. Flash-phot. Fock.

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[152]

in their conversation and show no sign of affection. A man going out to hunt merely says: "I am off and shall return in 3–4 days". She says at most "Very good", and when he comes back there will be no form of greeting or conversation. Married couples who break this rule and evince great devotion or jealousy are not expected to remain together for any length of time, as in this way they will bind themselves to each other. This will stop them attending to their respective occupations which often take them in different directions. Devotion between man and wife, undoubtedly often present, belongs to the night only and is closely connected with the sexual life. It is as though the recollection of the first trial marriage has delineated a pattern to be followed; first the intimate, nocturnal meeting at the dancing-place and in the girl's home; then the sudden awakening to the demands of the father-in-law. It is a general feature with both children and adults that they are far more confident and daring by night than by day.

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The Mataco are monogamous. There are very few examples of men with two or three wives, and then it was always a matter of chiefs. The polygyny of chiefs is probably an ancient custom, as it is sanctioned in the account about the first appearance of woman. Incidentally, monogamy is strictly enforced, and no form of extra-marital sexual relations is socially sanctioned. In case of infidelity

5: Fock E-5 (1962) 1963 SI7 Mataco SI7

837 within a marriage, distinction is made between the unfaithfulness of a man and of a woman, the latter's being considered the more serious offence. If a man commits adultery it is often said that a young girl has intervened. In that case the wife—when she realizes what is going on—with some of her female relatives, attacks the girl. For this reason, in earlier days particularly, girls never cut their [302] nails in order that they could draw blood from any rival. It is noteworthy that whereas the wife obtains the help of her female relations, the same is not so in [602] the case of the intervening girl. Her family maintains "that it is not worth fighting about", but in view of the absolute solidarity that is customary within families, it must mean that her conduct is regarded as positively wrong, by her own kin, that is to say, socially.

In the event that a man should have fled with the intervener, the wife and her female relatives pursue them and attempt by force to drag back the man. As a rule they are successfull in this, because the other men will not concern themselves about it, considering it a purely feminine affair. When a man is unfaithful 684 and is regarded as the active party, he also risks being beaten to his senses by his wife and her female relatives. On one occasion I saw a young man beaten black and blue and thrown out of his house. He had had relations in the forest with a girl, and had been seen by another woman who told his wife of it. When the man returned home and had lain down to sleep he was beaten almost unconscious by his wife, her sister, and a third woman in order to teach him to behave better. No one in the village wished to intervene. A man who persists in infidelity will be [586] reproached, even by his own relations, and his wife has the right to leave him without incurring censure.

As a rule a woman's unfaithfulness will have more far-reaching results than that of a man. In the first place the husband does not trouble to consider whether the wife is the seducer or the seduced, but always gives her the blame. Her fate depends upon the temperament of her husband. If he discovers her, he can beat her in order that her behaviour shall be improved, and in that event he seldom [586] does anything to his rival. As a rule, however, he will at once divorce her and chase her away. Her family will make no protest, and will at most vilify her for having behaved badly. It is said that the reason why a man wants to be divorced at once is because he thinks that she will be unfaithful to him again and again, so that at last he will lose his head and attempt to kill her and her lover. There are 628 numerous examples of this: the wife will perhaps fly with her lover to another 682 village, but the husband will follow them, concealing himself until the evening dance begins. He will then steal into the chain of dancers and wait for a good opportunity—a pause in the dance—when he can kill first his rival and then his wife whilst they are together. He flees back to his family under cover of darkness, but will seldom be pursued because the village will wait until the morning to find the killer's tracks and thus identify him. Every Mataco knows the footprints [822] of all his village fellows, and often many more. A member of the dead man's

5: Fock E-5 (1962) 1963 S17 Mataco S17

of band exogamy, is the main reason for blood feuds and inter-band warfare. The marriage system thus obtains a far-reaching political influence. Its effectiveness in the case of the Mataco seems far from sufficient, for one thing because no form of extra-marital valve exists. The only thing in this respect is the trial marriage, which is interesting because it clearly discloses the factors that are considered most important in connexion with the creation of a family: first the girl's choice according to inclination and sexual standards, then the sorting done by the couple and the parents on the basis of economic and social position, and, finally, the demand that the union shall be fruitful. Until these three demands are complied with a marriage is not fully recognized by society; should the woman remain childless, it is an acceptable reason for the man to be divorced from her.

Presumably on account of the undefined character of the contract of marriage, no specific wedding ceremony takes place with the Mataco. Family and band solidarity is regarded as so important that the ban on incest and its conventional extension, band exogamy, are considered as measures to counter internal dissension and the forming of cliques. Based on instincts, marriage as an institution can only partially be analysed by an ethnographer, but it seems fair to say that the function of the Mataco marriage, both biologically and culturally, is the creation and maintenance of the family, the greatest possible consideration being shown to the wish of the two parties to preserve the solidarity of the respective bands without thereby upsetting mutual peace. With the Mataco, therefore, marriage, mankind's oldest contract, is not so much a matter of the individual as a family affair.

NIELS FOCK
University of Copenhagen,
July 1962.

6:Métraux E-5 (no date) 1943 SI7 Mataco SI7

and jerky contractions. A strong diarrhea is also a concomittant effect of the poisoning.

Those who have been saved by prompt medical treatment (injection or morphine) describe their symptoms as follows: At first they feel considerably depressed, then they grow more and more dizzy "as if the world were going head over heels". The dizzines increases until the victim is forced to lie down.

It is apparent from the cases cited here that suicide among the Matako does not always take a collective form, but it may frequently do so. Death by suicide appears to be a temptation to which individuals yield with amazing facility and which is often contagious.

Case Histories

The very day I arrived at the Mission of San Andrés on the Upper Pilcomayo I was made aware of the frequency of suicide by poisoning. A young Indian in the mission suddenly took sick. (He was suffering from malaria.) At the first sign of his illness, his family rushed to the missionary to tell him the young man had eaten sachasandia and to ask for prompt help.

Later there was a real alarm when a young woman actually did attempt to kill herself. The woman had a lover who lived in another village with his wife and two children. The man's grandmother (Mother's mother) feared that he might desert his family and took steps to prevent such a disgrace. For this reason she called on the missionary and urged him to interfere. The missionary talked to the girl's parents and learned from them that the girl's lover often stayed at their home. A few days before the young woman had gone to her lover's village and had snatched a knife and other goods from his house. When she returned to her home, she demanded a compensation before she would break off relations with the man. Afterwards she suddenly left home and went to call on distant relatives in whose house she went to sleep. When these people wanted to send her back, they were unable to wake her. An old woman noticed a faint smell of sachasandia on her breath and immediately sent for the missionary. The limbs of the patient were already twitching, her mouth rigid. After an injection of morphine she began to vomit and so recovered.

Second Case. At another mission a 16 year old orphan committed suicide. The girl had had several love affairs but had formed no stable tie with a man. Finally she ate sachasandia and, since no one came to her assistance, died in the middle of the village. A woman took the dead orphan's head on her lap and her distant relatives wailed the whole day and night. Afterwards, however, the body was left

6:Métraux E-5 (no date) 1943 SI7 Mataco SI7

the victim awaits death. It is said that some men take poison to blackmail a woman into complying with their wishes.

It has been noticed time and again that only young people eat sachasandia as a rule. Among the cases cited above there is only one of an elderly woman who attempted to take her life. In this connection, the question arises of whether suicides are more common among women than among men. No data on this point have been gathered, but it is the impression of the missionaries that suicide is equally common among men and women with perhaps a slight majority among women. The first problem raised by the frequency of these suicides is whether the suicides are caused by new conditions of life —by culture clash and lack, of adjustment to a new world— or whether they were equally frequent formerly when the native culture still functioned? Since no Matako group now lives in its earlier surroundings, the truth of the matter will be difficult to learn. If the problem is presented to the missionaries who are largely responsible for the disappearance of the Indian culture, they always insist that suicides were one of the worst manifestations of the culture before the Indians were saved. They point out, moreover, that the number of suicides was particularly high at the time when the missionaries began their work in the region, and they establish a close relation between suicide and dancing. One of the missionaries wrote to me: "In the old days when the Indians were still dancing, there used to be as many as a dozen attempted suicides in one day, resulting in my being up most of the night going from one to another. They were so many and so frequent, however, and it happened so long ago that I can remember none in detail". This evidence is confirmed by other missionaries who recall that the worst epidemics always occured in connection with the night dances which have a decidedly sexual character. At such times young married men who took part in the entertainments slept with girls, thus arousing the jealousy of their wives and the anger of their mothers-in law. If as a result one or two people committed suicide, others would follow their example.

The link established between night dances and suicide was the main reason for the strict tabu against dancing which is now enforced in every mission. Indians have been made so aware of the evil of dancing that even little girls have been kept from their normal and charming jumping about. Missionaries, however, are not responsible for this measure; it has been self-imposed by the Indians.

No cases of suicide are known among other tribes who live in the same region and under similar conditions. At any rate, I have never

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433 They do not work, plant, or do anything similar; they
222 are but mediocre fishermen and barely hunters. To live they
241 lay up great stocks of chañar, algarrobas, and mistol fruits, and with some gourd seeds placed under the earth they have extraordinary harvests if the year is moderately rainy.

786 They organize their orgies when the algarrobas, chañar,
578 and mistol are in season, and then the quarrels and murders occur
682 among the men; these crimes go unpunished by the authorities, for there are none. But if the one who has perished had relatives they will take revenge.

342 /320/ They do not bother to build houses or such things.
513 They make a kind of oven; for it they bend some branches of small trees, fix them to the ground, cover these branches with straw or grass, and they sleep underneath in a pile in the company of their dogs.

164 This is the reason for the excessive mange which kills
515 them and makes them look so disgusting, since they are not at all partisans of the daily bath, as the Chiriguano are, and when they do bathe, they roll about in the river sand or in the ashes of their oven-houses.

584 They do not seek the consent of their parents for marriage
585 nor do they have ceremonies. Do two young persons, a man and a woman, love each other? They leave the common settlement, go to the woods, stay a few weeks, and then return, now married, to live with their in-laws or to make another oven like the one of their elders.

586 Young people divorce each other easily, but they are
152 more constant than the Chiriguano in married life. Nonetheless,
837 the women are very jealous and do not readily consent to their
593 husbands' being with other women; for this reason they keep them content with the work of bringing them much fruit from the forest and caressing them.

302 Men and women cut their hair; some of them stain their
301 faces and pierce their ear lobs, in which they put a piece of wood, like the Toba, but this is not a distinctive mark of the race.